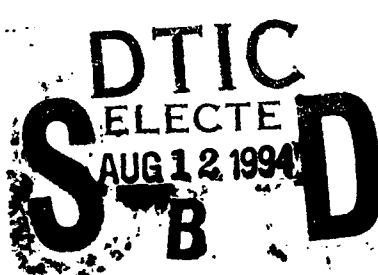


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Page 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE March 1993		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED FINAL	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Perryville : Strategic, Tactical, or Unnecessary				5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Arnold W. Carter Lt Col, US A					
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) AIR WAR COLLEGE 325 CHENNAULT CIRCLE MAXWELL AFB AL 36112-6427				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER Unnumbered AWC research paper	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A				10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER N/A	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES PAPER IS WRITTEN TO FULFILL ACADEMIC RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS FOR AN IN-RESIDENCE SENIOR SERVICE PROFESSIONAL MILITARY SCHOOL.					
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED				12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) See page iii					
					
14. SUBJECT TERMS Perryville, Strategic, Unnecessary				15. NUMBER OF PAGES 20	
				16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLAS	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLAS	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT UNCLAS	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL		

**AIR WAR COLLEGE
AIR UNIVERSITY**

PERRYVILLE: STRATEGIC, TACTICAL, OR UNNECESSARY?

**by
ARNOLD W. CARTER
LTC, USA**

**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM
REQUIREMENT**

Advisor: Dr. Howard Hensel

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

March 1993

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Perryville: Strategic, Tactical, or Unnecessary?

AUTHOR: Arnold W. Carter, Lieutenant Colonel (P), U.S. Army

The battle of Perryville, Kentucky is virtually unknown to all but the most informed Civil War buffs. Few people recognize the strategic significance this brief but bloody battle played in the Western Theater in 1862. Had Braxton Bragg's Army of the Heartland carried the day at Perryville the Union would have suffered an enormous set-back to the hard-fought gains they had achieved up to that point of engagement. the ill-fated invasion of Kentucky possessed great potential for Southern hopes, but ended in an inglorious retreat that placed rebel forces in a defensive posture they would never be capable of altering for the remainder of the war.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

LTC(P) Arnold W. Carter (M.S. Criminal Justice, M.P.A., Public Administration) has spent over ten years in Army Corps and Divisions, in Germany and CONUS assignments. He was a Battalion Commander during OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, and holds the Bronze Star and Meritorious Service Medal (5 OLC). He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, where he developed a keen interest in Civil War battles. LTC(P) Carter is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1993.

Introduction

When we think of the Civil War, grand images come to mind. The chivalrous General Robert E. Lee at Gettysburg, and later at Appomattox; General Ulysses S. Grant, dressed like a Union private, but possessing the heart of a lion; President Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator and steady beacon of light for the North. We also envision the endless stream of men who fought for a cause, something they truly believed in, something that the great majority of them felt compelled to do -- defend their way of life and cling to a belief they defiantly did not want to lose.

To the average person, the Civil War does not conjure up strategic campaigns or battles that could have effected the outcome of the war. There is little thought given to poorly executed planning or ill-conceived actions by the great warriors of that day. That is the express purpose of this treatise, to examine how one campaign, indeed one battle, was in fact a pivotal, crucial factor in the early years of the Civil War. Few people have ever heard of Perryville, Kentucky and fewer still are aware that its outcome was paramount to following campaigns, such as Vicksburg and Chattanooga. With this prelude in mind, let us re-examine the Battle of Perryville and ask three questions:

- 1. Was it a strategic battle?**
- 2. Was it merely an opportune tactical engagement? or**
- 3. Was it unnecessary at the time?**

Kentucky -- A Crucial Border State

Before we address the above questions, a basic understanding of the Heartland of the Confederacy is necessary. Fenton (p.i.) observed that

the Border States (Missouri, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Maryland) were the key and essential states to Lincoln's strategy. They provided divergent areas where the two cultures of North and South clashed for supremacy. Elements of both societies were present long before the Civil War began, and political, social, economic, and industrial divisions among the populace abounded in the various regions of the states. Few inhabitants of the Border States could have predicted that their homelands would be among the decisive areas in the Civil War.

In retrospect, the ultimate victory of the North appears to have been decided in the Heartland of the Confederacy, commonly referred to by historians as the Western Theater. While General Lee and his brave Virginians struggled so magnificently to keep the Union forces out of Richmond, the Confederate capitol, armies within Tennessee and Kentucky marched incredible distances and fought fierce bloody battles for control of entire states (11:1-6). This region was especially crucial to the South, for most of its raw materials manufacturing facilities, and rich, fertile agricultural lands were there.

Politically speaking, Kentucky presented a dilemma to the North and South. The state of Jefferson Davis' and Lincoln's birth, Kentucky had declared itself neutral with a legislature vote of 48 to 47 following the fall of Fort Sumter (8:39-40). Just how this neutrality could be accomplished no one attempted to explain, but all Kentucky seemed hypnotized by the fatuous dream of a miraculous, peaceful neutrality to be somehow achieved between the battle lines of the unionists and secessionists then girding themselves for a bloody struggle (8:11). Jones observed that Kentucky was divided between a governor favoring secession and a legislature opposed, seeking to maintain its neutrality. This had resulted

in the accumulation of Union and Confederate forces on its borders and their movement into the state when, without Jefferson Davis' approval, the Confederate commander in West Tennessee precipitated military action in August 1861 by taking control of Columbus, Kentucky, a defensible town and railway terminus on the Mississippi. This had the effect of destroying Kentucky's neutrality and removing the state as a valuable military buffer for the Confederacy (9:18-19). The state was severely criticized by both sides, and the alluring position of "*neutrality*" set the stage for an early struggle. Later on November 18, 1861, there was held at Russellville, Kentucky (within that southern part of the state occupied by the Confederates) a "Sovereignty Convention" which passed an ordinance of secession, elected G. W. Johnson governor, chose other state officials, and sent commissioners to Richmond to represent the state. In December 1861, the Confederate Congress voted to admit Kentucky and throughout the war the state had Representatives and Senators who were elected by the vote of the Kentucky soldiers in the Confederate armies. (8:46)

National Strategies

With the backdrop of knowledge about Kentucky and the Border States, an examination of both Union and Confederate strategies should be reviewed. The close relationship between politics, on the one hand, and military strategy and the actions of armies, on the other, has meant that strategy and politics have traditionally gone hand in hand, a point emphasized by the renowned German military scholar Karl von Clausewitz (9:20). Lincoln was fortunate in having the counsel of one of the finest soldiers the nation had produced to that point. In the spring of 1861, General of the Union Armies, Winfield Scott, proposed that President

Lincoln adopt a plan for the ensuing war. Instead of a military strategy directed at depleting rebel armed forces, Scott proposed a political strategy, one which aimed at securing political results directly. Realizing the difficulty of subduing so large a country as the Confederacy, he thought in terms of military measures that would have a political effect and so help bring the Rebels to terms (9:21). With some modifications, the "Anaconda Plan", as it came to be known in newspapers, called for:

- 1. A naval blockade of all southern ports.**
- 2. A Virginia offensive, driving toward Richmond.**
- 3. Securing the border states.**
- 4. A Mississippi Valley campaign.**

This plan, if effective, would squeeze the South economically and cut the main transportation line of communication--the Mississippi River. In time, this strategy would attrit the Confederate forces and secure submission with the least amount of loss in manpower and resources. In retrospect, Northern strategy was flawed (most plans are when subjected to hindsight), but it gave the Union states a clear focus for campaign plans and provided a single-purpose strategy to embark upon.

As for Southern military strategy, a cursory examination reveals an established national strategy, but one that was not universally accepted by each secessionist state. More importantly, it is quite doubtful if the South ever had an agreed military strategy that fully supported national objectives. Most historians do agree that their objectives were:

- 1. Secure Southern independence**
- 2. Defend Confederate States of America Territories**

By necessity, the Confederacy was cast into a defensive posture from the onset of war. As the defenders, the South had two major offsetting

advantages: the immense size of their country and the traditional supremacy of the defense over the offense. The primitive communications of a country like the South could delay invading armies, and its geographical extent could swallow up a sizable force. The defender could either make use of some of this space to retreat or choose to fight a battle, relying on the dominance of the tactical defense to nullify the Federal force's superiority in numbers (9:10). Within this framework, it was an axiom of state-of-the-art warfare that offensive operations could be pursued by field commanders as circumstances allowed. The Confederacy would obviously defend their strategic strong points, such as Vicksburg and Island #10, Mobile, and New Orleans. Also, and important to this paper, Southern forces would establish interior lines of defense, far forward in their frontiers, and use the great mobility their rail lines afforded them over vast distances to augment defensive positions. It was generally agreed by President Davis and his field commanders that the Union could not attack everywhere, on all fronts, at the same time. Therefore the South, while out-manned and missing vital equipment for war, could withstand the brutal assaults long enough to gain foreign recognition and aid while eroding Northern confidence in the Lincoln administration. If Northern sentiment shifted away from Lincoln, then the South could possibly secure a truce and buy more time.

Thus the national strategies were set. The North embarking upon a unified military strategy, well-tailored to the overall grand strategy of their government, while the South scrambled to field an army, establish a new government and defend its newly seceded States, absent a clearly defined military strategy that was at best distantly related to grand Southern strategy. Students in the profession of arms well know that

under the best of circumstances, the South would require more planning and refinement in executing this agenda. Unfortunately, the essential governing factor of time was working against them.

Bragg's Choice: An Operational Raid

The greatest offensive of the Confederacy in the western theater during the entire war was General Braxton Bragg's invasion of Kentucky (14:119). Many historians have referred to this campaign as an "operational raid" of the first order. In fact, raids proved to be one of the Civil War's most effective strategies. Probably the oldest form of warfare, by the end of 1862 the Confederates had made it a full strategic partner with the Napoleonic operational strategy of concentration and the turning movement. Essentially an offensive strategy, the raid could succeed because it avoided the enemy, or at least any of his main forces (9:84). How the Kentucky raid began is intriguing and somewhat confusing.

The Army of Tennessee was commanded by the irascible Braxton Bragg. On June 20, 1862, he had assumed command inauspiciously replacing General P.G.T. Beauregard when Corinth, Mississippi was evacuated. According to Woodsworth, *"the fact was that Bragg had not had enough time to consider the strategic situation and decide what he ought to do. After being immersed in the day-to-day details of running the Army for Beauregard, he had suddenly found himself in command. His thinking on the issue of campaign planning was unclear"* (16:129). Part of Bragg's overall command was in east Tennessee, spread from Chattanooga to Cumberland Gap, Kentucky and totaling 480 miles in distance. This particular span of control was commanded by Major General Edmund Kirby Smith, technically Bragg's subordinate, yet treated as a separate field commander

by Davis. General Smith is described as *"an ambitious man whose abilities were highly regarded in Richmond. Smith wanted to accomplish something spectacular, and the idea of invading and occupying neutral Kentucky for the Confederacy was very attractive (11:67-71)."*

In the early summer of 1862, Bragg and Smith correctly concluded that Union forces under General Buell would soon threaten Chattanooga. Perhaps Bragg had favored an attack to regain Corinth, but he soon changed his mind. In conjunction with Smith's forces, he decided to strike an effective blow in Middle Tennessee from Chattanooga, gaining the enemy's rear, cutting off his supplies and dividing his forces (10:266-267). Bragg responded by vacating his position in Corinth, Mississippi and sending 40,000 troops via Alabama and Georgia to buttress defenses in southeastern Tennessee. Once Bragg had arrived in Chattanooga, he faced a dilemma on courses of action. President Davis had directed him to defeat Buell, then headquartered in Decatur, Alabama and clear Union forces out of middle Tennessee before starting to Kentucky. Further, Tennessee Governor Isham Harris was exerting pressure on President Davis and Bragg to liberate Nashville from Buell's grasp. Another option was to commence on a campaign into Kentucky. Bragg's decision, as we now know, was to join forces with Kirby Smith and depart for Kentucky after reassembling his troops in Chattanooga. This was the beginning of a tremendous maneuvering action by both sides: Buell withdrawing northwest, believing he was greatly outnumbered by Bragg; Bragg advancing northwest toward the Cumberland Gap with central Kentucky and the Ohio River as his objectives (11:67-74).

It is important to underscore the strategic value of the geographic corridor that extended from Memphis through Nashville, Chattanooga, Knoxville to Richmond. To apply modern terminology, it was one of the Confederacy's key Lines of Communication, or LOC. Through this area ran crucial railroad lines which linked together the newly formed Confederacy. Vital telegraph communication wires allowed President Jefferson Davis and other officials to dispatch orders and guidance in the conduct of government and the execution of war. The importance of this region, particularly Chattanooga, was not lost on the North or South. While describing Union plans, Hensel notes ". . . General Halleck (Army Group Commander, Western Theater) felt the key to victory was the seizure of those geographical locations vital to the enemy and the conquest of his territory. He ordered a portion of his command under General Buell to move eastward, along the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, rebuilding the railway as they advanced, intersect the union forces which had already moved south from Nashville and held positions in middle Tennessee and extreme northern Alabama, and capture Chattanooga." (7:67). Chattanooga's defense must be entrusted to the ablest of Southern commanders, thus Kirby Smith had the staggering responsibility to hold this area and deny Union capture.

New Governor -- Unforeseen Battle

After a month of advancement, Bragg and his forces finally arrived in the Frankfort - Lexington area. One of his first actions was to install Richard C. Hawes as the Provisional Confederate Governor of Kentucky, under the Confederate government. Johnson, who had been elected governor when the provisional government was set up in Russellville in 1861, had been killed at Shiloh, and Hawes, who had been chosen

lieutenant governor, succeeded him. He had joined the Army in Kentucky, and much political importance was attached to his actual seating in the Governor's chair in the capitol. Kentucky had been formally and officially accepted as one of the Confederate States of America; it had representatives in the Confederate Congress, and it had a star in the Confederate flag. Its theoretical and technical allegiance to the Confederacy was, however, but a mockery so long as a state government of Northern sympathies occupied Frankfort. If Hawes could set up a "*de facto*" government of Confederate allegiance, it would change the whole political picture. Granting its influence on public opinion, one may still think that Bragg gave this matter too much attention, to the point of preoccupation, at a time when his army was face to face with the enemy (8:177). Connelly is much more critical of Bragg at this point, stating "*...Bragg seemed unworried. Perhaps it was his old inability to deviate from his rigid policies. Hawes' inauguration, though important, would be useless should the Rebels be defeated. But he had decided that nothing would stop the inauguration.*" (1:250-251). This was done in Frankfort, the state capitol, amid great fanfare on October 4, 1862. As it turned out, Hawes would have the distinction of serving over the shortest-lived Confederate government, for within a week he was rapidly retreating back to Tennessee with his military protectorate, a defeated Bragg (15:55).

Buell meanwhile passed through Bowling Green and finally arrived in Louisville. Bragg continued to bivouac in the Lexington area, spending a leisurely eight days in Bardstown and spreading his army throughout the better part of six counties. This gave Buell adequate time to rest his own weary troops. Fully recovered and strengthened by reinforcements and a

twenty-mile-long supply train, Buell now began his march to intercept Bragg's raiding Confederate forces (15:55-57).

The actual battle of Perryville was fought over a distance of some 50 miles. An examination of the tactics, offensives, and counter-offensives illustrates that both Bragg and Buell were poorly informed about each other's strength and actual location. Charitably speaking, their judgment and orders were vague and confusing. History has been unkind to Buell and Bragg during this battle and both generals would be severely criticized by their superiors for tactical ineptness during the encounter.

As for the outcome, Buell's 80,000 man army was the clear-cut victor. The Federal's lost 4,200 men, while Bragg's 52,000 Southern force suffered 3,400 casualties. A review of Civil War battles reveals Perryville as one of the bloodiest ever fought, particularly when viewing casualties per capita on the battlefield. Casualties, however, are not the decisive criteria here. Bragg's defeat guaranteed the end of Southern hope that the Confederacy may occupy Kentucky or win it over for their cause. Further, a retreating Bragg would not be able to prevent Union forces from marching back into Tennessee and ultimately gaining control of the critical Memphis-Chattanooga LOC. Curiously, the Perryville Campaign is little understood, for it was surpassed in prominence by a more famous operational raid only days apart, Lee's incursion into Maryland which ended at Antietam (15:85-86).

Was Perryville a Strategic Campaign?

What were Bragg, Smith and Jefferson Davis thinking when the decision was made to launch the Kentucky campaign? Was there a strategic tie to Southern efforts, and did Bragg possess the resources to

accomplish the objectives he had set for his Army? In late 1862, it is again important to note that Kentucky was technically neutral, if anything pro-Union, but superficially a member of the Confederacy. There was much to gain in the bluegrass state and with this campaign if executed properly.

The Perryville campaign has all the preliminary markings of a strategic effort. Listed below are the factors and reasonings Bragg et. al. chose to go into Kentucky.

1. Militarily, Bragg was attempting to strategically turn Buell's position in west-Tennessee and northern Alabama. If successful, Bragg would relieve Union pressure in that area, and sever the rail line of communications connecting Buell's supply centers in Louisville and Nashville.

2. Politically, Bragg could threaten the Ohio River cities, like Cincinnati and Louisville, install a Confederate Governor who could then enact legislation for conscription to support the Confederate Army, and embarrass Union forces, thus further discrediting the Lincoln administration. A military victory could very well gain foreign recognition and much-needed aid.

3. Economically, Southern forces could subsist in a rich and fertile state relatively unspoiled and with an abundant Autumn harvest. This would greatly relieve an over-burdened and exhausted supply line that barely could sustain Bragg's Army.

These above factors are adequate to support an argument for a strategic campaign. Whether this campaign was an operational raid or a hastily planned invasion is less important than its overall merit of supporting the Southern grand strategy stated at the beginning of this paper . . . *Defend Confederate States of America Territories*. Also, this

campaign supported the military strategy of defending the vital Memphis - Chattanooga LOC.

Contradictory Analysis

In modern warfare campaign planning, officers are directed to subject every campaign plan to a strict analysis utilizing five criteria. They are:

1. Suitability. Will the course of action actually accomplish the mission when carried out successfully? In other words, is it aimed at the correct objectives?

2. Feasibility. Do we have the required resources, i.e., the personnel, transportation, resupply facilities? Can the resources be made available in the time contemplated?

3. Acceptability. Even though the action will accomplish the mission and resources are available, is it worth the cost in terms of possible losses? Losses in time, material and position are weighed in addition to purely military losses.

4. Completeness. A last check is given to confirm that the action is technically correct. Does the action address and adequately answer:

- Who (what forces) will execute it?**
- What type of action is contemplated?**
- When is it to begin?**
- Where it will take place?**
- How it will be accomplished?**

5. Variety. There are military operations in which only one feasible course of action exists. The commander analyzes and compares substantially different courses of action and chooses the option most suitable for his strategic task.

Using these five criteria and the information already mentioned, was Bragg's campaign truly strategic in the purest sense of the word? First, the campaign plan was suitable. Had Bragg been successful in defeating Buell and installing Hawes as a Confederate Governor, the South would have received a tremendous boost in morale and probably international recognition. Unquestionably Bragg would have thwarted Union planning, gained an additional allied state, accessed his Army to an untapped wealth of manpower and logistical support and shocked the Lincoln administration with a stinging defeat to the Western Theater. Furthermore, by gaining access to the Ohio River Bragg would have been able to interdict vital shipping by Union forces to the Mississippi and create a panic-stricken atmosphere in Cincinnati and the lower region of the state of Ohio. This plan was intoxicatingly suitable to Southern hopes, which by Autumn of 1862 were in a faltering state.

It is doubtful if Bragg, his staff or subordinate commanders considered the feasibility criteria that is defined above. Had they been more deliberate and worked through our modern-day staff estimate process, they would more than likely recommend to Bragg a different course of action. Was it feasible to assume Bragg could support his army in Kentucky without establishing a rail line of communications. He was automatically restricted to an operational raid by virtue of his limited supplies. Also, could he expect a newly established confederate Governor to convince a pro-Union state that conscription was in the best interests of Kentucky? Almost certainly there would have been internal rebellion against Hawes and his puppet government. Bragg would have been faced with the likelihood of establishing a standing defense force to protect Hawes, and the inevitable task of rounding up Kentuckians who

unwillingly accepted their draft into confederate gray. By late 1862, bluegrass natives had grown complacently comfortable with their neutrality and were passive to the thoughts of taking up arms to defend either side. The feasibility of Bragg's campaign lend itself to more assumptions and uncertainties than factual date. There is an erroneous tendency among officers of all ranks in every historical setting to treat assumptions as facts. It is very possible that Bragg and his counterparts were victims of assumptions that never came to pass.

Bragg's campaign plan would not pass the acceptability criteria for the simple reason of possible losses. The South had limited resources and an even smaller manpower pool to draw troops from. While they potentially would gain new volunteers or conscripts, the risk of losing an army the size of Bragg's would have been catastrophic in the Western Theater. As stated earlier, Davis had directed Bragg to defeat Buell and clear Union forces out of middle Tennessee before starting to Kentucky. No doubt this weighed heavily on Bragg's decision-making and probably accounts for his reluctance to force a decisive engagement on Buell during the march into Kentucky or after the initial battle of Perryville. Stated another way, Bragg had much more to lose in Kentucky than Buell.

Even if Bragg's campaign plan had been acceptable, it certainly would not have been complete. Every reference to this campaign and the battle of Perryville quickly spells out the absence of any unity of effort by Bragg and his field commanders, especially the mercurial Kirby Smith. A clear delineation of geographical areas of responsibility for combat was never established so as to insure an effective defense. Also, the absence of assigned geographical boundaries left seams between Confederate forces that resulted in their inability to find Buell's main axis of advance (center

of gravity) and fix it in terms of gathering reliable intelligence and offensive intent. An in-depth study of Bragg's tactical decision-making during the battle of Perryville depicts a field commander in a reactive posture, trying to respond to one bit of intelligence at a time, never having a complete grasp of the battle that raged around him. The primary fault of this incompleteness can easily be traced to the plan's inception, for Kirby Smith was at best a reluctant follower of Bragg, and no doubt can be faulted for his premature departure from Tennessee without closer coordination with his field commander. Suffice to say there is ample room for fault, and Bragg does not stand alone in the confusion of command, control and communications on this campaign.

The criteria of variety is less important for the purpose of this campaign. Again, Bragg had options available to him, but students of this period are limited to courses of action and speculation on any variety thereafter. What we can infer must be an alteration of what Bragg actually did . . . choose a strategic turning movement and place Buell in a geographical disadvantage. Whether Bragg could have skirted north or south of Buell's position anywhere other than Kentucky is doubtful primarily because of supply potential in the region.

Certainly a strong, logical course of action could have been agreed on by Bragg and his corps commanders in the Army of Tennessee. The Western Theater was suffering a steady stream of military set-backs. They were out-manned and under-resourced. Further, spirits in the South were sagging and a glorious, sensational victory would be a tremendous boost to Confederate efforts. Driving onward to Louisville, commandeering control of the Ohio River, severing the industrial North's vital flow of resources to Buell would have been an enormous strategic victory.

Was Perryville Tactical?

It is equally difficult to make a tenable argument for Perryville as a tactical campaign. As Bragg once remarked, *"This campaign must be won by marching, not by fighting."* (10:288) Up until the battle of Perryville, Bragg had succeeded in his efforts. He had forced the Union evacuation of northern Alabama and central Tennessee without fighting a battle. During the Civil War, commanders whose primary mission was defensive rarely traveled great distances to engage the enemy. Had Bragg chosen to flank Buell in Murfreesboro, Tennessee or Huntsville, Alabama as the Union prepared for a Chattanooga offensive, we would today applaud his daring initiative and willingness to seize the offensive or channel the enemy. In that era of warfare history, flanking actions by corps-sized forces would have been expected, and Bragg could have been chosen for his terrain and exploited the element of surprise. Bragg knew that one tactical engagement would not decide this campaign. Bragg had chosen a logistical, turning campaign rather than a military confrontation. As Jones notes, *"This strategy aimed at weakening and ultimately depleting the hostile armies by taking away their means of supply and thus depriving them of weapons, horses, recruits, food and fodder."* (9:132). When Bragg realized that Buell would be able to resupply from Louisville, he knew he would have to retreat.

An Unnecessary Campaign?

Archer Jones, a recognized authority on the Civil War, has observed that *"...the typical Civil War battle turns out like those of most other wars; a different outcome rarely would change the course of the war. The political context, war aims, and the effects on public and official opinion give most*

campaigns, as well as battles, the bulk of their significance." (9:x) Bragg was well aware that his incursion into Kentucky was a risk. He had further observed that should he succeed, he could gain a strategic advantage against Union forces in the Western Theater without severely attriting his own Army. Bragg had many options available to him upon assuming command, but as Jones surmises, neither of those options or the results of Perryville would have significantly affected the ultimate fate of the Army of Tennessee.

So, the answer to this question is YES. It was necessary, merely because it occurred when it did. When Bragg and Smith finally agreed on the campaign, sanctioned by a distracted Davis, it was the destiny of war that made Perryville happen. Scholars may debate the advantages and disadvantages of the battle, the leadership of field commanders on the scene, and the decisions of both parties in the conflict. Such discussions are productive to study of war, but cannot alter the events that occurred before, during and after Perryville.

CONCLUSION

Hindsight for modern military historians allows perfect conclusions. We bring to our discussions informed observations derived from studies and readings which permit rational endings quickly. Perryville and the campaign into Kentucky was flawed from the beginning. It is easy to see today what should have been obvious to Bragg, his staff, and field commanders in 1862. But we also know that war is not simple, and those leaders in the furnace of battle did not operate with unerring clarity. It is possible to have sharp vision, yet poor focus, and I submit that this was the operative description for Bragg and his army at that moment. He did

**his best, and that is all the South could have hoped for in the Civil War.
One general, one army, one nation striving to preserve a gallant cause
during the most bitter war in our history.**

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